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**South African Communist Party, 5 February 2013**

## **Drop the Concept “Essential Service”**

The SACP has witnessed the ongoing debate sparked by the decision of the ANC NEC Lekgotla on the issues of making education an essential service.

Without locking ourselves into a language use debate, after having listened to the debate firstly as participants in the Lekgotla and secondly in subsequent interviews conducted by the ANC leadership, we are of the view as the SACP that in order to keep with the spirit and intent of the proposals the phrase essential service must be dropped in the debate, by both sides. Concepts are not used in abstract in society but are an approximation of reality, as it exists. Unfortunately a concept of essential service in terms of our law and ILO standards means something different. The SACP is aware that in the public service broadly, the current raging debate about education excluded, there has not been a successful conclusion of the negotiations on what services are indeed essential services. This matter has been a thorny subject strike after strike in the public sector and alliance processes to resolve the issues have not borne any fruit.

The latest right wing opportunism of the DA to jump in and support an ANC call and immediately want to extend this to limiting the right of workers in the education sector to strike is just one example of how a discussion can be distorted. The SACP holds the view that declaring teaching an essential service by law would not pass the test.

The SACP however agrees that no one can differ with the need to make education a single and foremost important service in society so that in the manner in which resources are provided we make sure that our children are supported to receive the best form of education. The SACP is further of the view that we should not just provide an education that produces readily made goods for absorption by the labour market but that our education, an education that must be essential, must be underpinned by the vision of People's Education for People's Power! This vision requires that our schooling and post schooling education systems do not just produce skilled individuals but individuals who are able to interpret and make sense of their political, ideological and socio-economic conditions and thus be actors to radically alter those conditions. The kind of education we must make essential must be a liberating one. This debate is a completely different debate from declaring teaching as an essential service and the two must be kept distinct.

In order for the above dialogue and action in society to be executed we must drop concepts that could just raise emotions at the expense of the issues at hand. The challenges at hand remain huge for us to be bogged down by concepts.

**Issued by the SACP**

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## **SADTU Media Statement on Special NEC, 5 March 2013**

### **SADTU calls for Basic Education Minister's resignation**

A special National Executive Committee of SADTU has expressed its loss of confidence in the minister of basic education in leading the department and ensuring the protection of collective bargaining – a critical right we have as workers which should be protected at all times. The special NEC which took place in Kempton Park yesterday (4 March, 2013) therefore resolved that the Minister of basic education, Ms Angie Motshekga must submit her resignation with immediate effect.

On the 12th of February, Minister Angie Motshekga unilaterally and with immediate effect, withdrew Collective Agreement No.1 of 2011. Ironically, this happened on the day of our picket to the Basic Education headquarters in defence of collective bargaining and the promotion of labour peace.

We view this unilateral withdrawal as a blatant assault of collective bargaining and we refuse to stand aside whilst our rights as workers are trampled upon by those in power.

The collective bargaining structures such as the Education Labour Relations Council are products of our struggles. To us, the collective bargaining chambers were established in order to ensure labour peace. The undermining of decisions and agreements taken in such structures is a recipe for disaster in the sector and sets a rather regrettable precedent. The withdrawal is a sign of a lack of appetite to see sustainable labour peace in a sector that has been declared as an apex priority by the ruling party.

We want to remind the minister that SADTU is party to the collective agreement that ensures that there will be no disruptions in education in the foreseeable

future. In the interest of the African working class child, we have held our end of the bargain despite the atrocious conditions that we are exposed to on a daily basis. Our members are still in class teaching under collapsing structures; they are still teaching large class sizes without the necessary learning and teaching materials being delivered on time.

It is clear that the minister has run out of ideas on how to turn around the DBE and has even resorted to publicity stunts such as the announcement of the biometric registration system without even having the decency expected of a minister to engage the major stakeholders.

In her desperate attempt to justify a potential spend of R430 Million on this biometric system where as a significant number of schools still lack basic infrastructure such as electricity, the minister goes on to misrepresent a report by the (Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality) SACMEQ III on teacher absenteeism.

Contrary to her mis-informed assertion that South Africa has the highest teacher absenteeism in SADC, the report states that South Africa is at number four as a country out of 15 countries, with the lowest teacher absenteeism in the SADC region with an average of eight days of absenteeism per teacher per year. Mauritius is the first with an average of six days. Teacher absenteeism in South Africa is in line with the average of SADC countries which is nine days per teacher per year.

The only time when the figures went up to an average of 20 days per year was in 2007 and 2010 due to strikes. It must be noted however that the “no work, no pay” principle applied regarding those days and they must thus not be misunderstood as leave days.

We find it both absurd and embarrassing that the minister chose to use this extreme example to “create” a non-existent plight in order to justify her introduction of the biometric registration system.

We cannot help it but wonder as to how did the minister know about teacher absenteeism because it was her not so long ago who pleaded with the public to not expect her to know what is happening in class because her function is to develop policy. This is the same minister who pleaded with the nation to not expect her to know how many learners received textbooks, because in her own words she doesn't deliver textbooks.

Policing teachers should not be her obsession because there is no evidence what so ever to suggest that this would improve their performance and morale which is

currently at an all time low under her leadership. It does not take a rocket scientist to figure out that this system has significant inherent flaws within it, for one it will not be able to determine the teacher's effectiveness inside the classroom and it also will not be able to record when the teacher is out of school due to school activities like sport, excursions and illness.

We are equally interested to know as to who will be on the receiving end of the tender to install this system which we regard as fruitless expenditure. In our conservative estimates, the projected amount of this system can build no less than 30 schools with labs, libraries and sport facilities which can undoubtedly dent the embarrassingly high number of mud and tree schools.

It is becoming difficult to take the minister seriously because it is under her watch that her DG transgresses PFMA regulations and yet she refuses blatantly to take disciplinary action and rather hides behind legal technicalities. We must remind the public that this is the same minister who went on national TV and called for the firing of the then Superintendent General of the Eastern Cape without due processes. The hypocrisy that is now being displayed towards the DG is mind boggling to say the least.

It is as clear as day light that different standards are being applied for certain departmental officials, when teachers misappropriate funds and disregard the PFMA they get dismissed where as others are not. This indicates that in the minister's eyes, some individuals in the department are more important than others and an animal farm attitude takes precedence.

The trend that she is setting in the department defies even the anti-corruption stance taken by the president, it is an open secret that she is harbouring individuals in her department that have been suspended for corruption from somewhere else. She is in fact creating a safe hub for corrupt officials.

This is after all the same minister who lacks initiative and embarrassingly copies every policy that is being implemented by the DA in the Western Cape and even through her silence supported the closure of 27 schools in that province.

It would be very ambitious of us however to expect any better from the minister because she deliberately misled parliament at some point and gave an impression that performance contracts for principals exist and on the verge of being signed where as on the contrary we had not even seen the draft of that contract.

It is once again very difficult to take the minister seriously as the teachers when she wrote an open letter early this year to all matriculants apologizing for the

inconvenience she has caused in the previous year but hardly an hour after that she tells the nation that there were no problems in Limpopo during the release of matric results.

We have always maintained that her triumphalistic announcement of the matric results was opportunistic and misleading. The improvement cannot be attributed to her only as she wishes. These are our efforts working together with the provincial departments because at national level collective bargaining collapsed the day she appointed Bobby Soobrayan.

Since 2009 the DBE has only concluded two collective agreements and never implemented any of them until the withdrawal of one of them last month. The outstanding issues in the ELRC are: draft agreement on 0,5% progression for parity which has been on ice for months without any shame from the minister, the OSD for office based personnel and School Management Team which seem to have fallen through the cracks.

The special NEC resolved that if the minister does not submit her long awaited resignation we will limit our interaction with the department to the employment contract and strictly within the working hours only. When it comes to marking, all SADTU members will no longer be available to mark supplementary exams, the ANA scripts and the end year exams because the collective agreement speaking to these functions has been withdrawn.

We will not participate in any departmental programme at all levels and we will not take any instruction from the ministry or department, ours will be to be in schools for 7 hours and no extra effort beyond that must be expected from us. We will go further and lobby all the other public sector unions to withdraw from the 3 year collective agreement that was intended to ensure labour peace because the minister has no intention to sustain it. We will further call upon all our members to boycott the upcoming teacher awards.

We have therefore reached a stage where we can make a passionate call to the minister to do the honourable thing and take the road less travelled by submitting her resignation as the minister of basic education with immediate effect. We are hopeful that this resignation which we are looking forward to, will have an annexure being the resignation of the DG of the department, Bobby Soobrayan.

The special NEC also resolved that the campaigns committee of the union must draw up a programme of action to mobilize all our members for an indefinite strike as a response to the assault on collective bargaining, our basic right as workers and to promote quality public education.

## **On COSATU**

The special NEC went further and deliberated on the recent developments within the federation COSATU. It is our view that media leakages take away the rights of the central executive committee to lead such as those that characterized the issues around the general secretary of the federation. Whilst the issues of the “commission of enquiry on the federation’s property” have been clarified by the federation, it is highly unacceptable that the media was unduly provided with information on internal matters albeit very misleading.

As an independent and autonomous organisation and affiliate of COSATU in good standing, we want to call upon all affiliates to respect our views because we have confidence in our democratic and internal processes. We call upon those unions that call others “funny people” and appeal to members to crush leaders to stop immediately.

We reject the recently published views by one Zachie Achmat on COSATU. Achmat is not a member of any affiliate within the federation. We want him to retract his statement and apologise to COSATU. Achmat made his views known before the Mangaung conference that if President Zuma is re-elected he will resign from the ANC, so we are not surprised by his ill-informed assertion. We do not need his views in our internal matters in the federation because no one is bigger than the federation.

We have also observed a foreign tendency in our federation, we received an email from one Yoliswa Dwane representing Equal Education soliciting support for the General Secretary of COSATU amongst NGOs. We view this act as being provocative and dangerous in the trade union movement. It is unprecedented and we will not leave this matter unattended because it seeks to sow divisions in the federation.

**Issued by SADTU Secretariat**

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**ANC Statement, 6 March 2013**

## **Response to SADTU Call for Minister of Basic Education to Resign**

SADTU is now accustomed to calls for resignations of senior public officials in the Department of Basic Education.

It is the ANC's view that SADTU is missing an opportunity to contribute positively to the debate contained in the ANC 53rd National Conference Resolution of making education an essential service. Such a resolution is intended to focus in improving the education of a black child.

This resolution will ensure that we provide education that will contribute to the socio-economic transformation and emancipation of a black child in the South African economy.

We have hope and trust in the collective leadership of SADTU that they will use this opportunity to contribute to this resolution of ensuring that education becomes an essential service.

**Issued by Gwede Mantashe, ANC Secretary General, African National Congress**

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**Course: Education**

**23081b, Compilation of SACP, SADTU and ANC statements**

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